CALLED. EQUIPPED. SENT.

INSPIRATIONS FROM 100 YEARS OF SHARING THE GOSPEL

LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES
www.lhm.org
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

Called. Equipped. Sent. ........................................ 1

Thematic Sections

Meaningful Living ............................................ 9
Spiritual Growth .............................................. 19
Prayer & Persecution ...................................... 27
Daily Walk ...................................................... 39
Grace, Mercy & Forgiveness .............................. 47
Christian Community ........................................ 57
Challenges ...................................................... 63
Marriage, Family & Finances ............................ 71
Days of Significance ........................................ 79
The Passion of Christ ......................................... 101
Witnessing & Outreach ..................................... 107

Authors ........................................................ 113
PREFACE

Life is change. As much as humans may strain against it, our lives and the people who are part of them never stop changing. This constant shifting creates challenges and questions for all humankind. In the midst of our lives here on earth, one thing alone is eternal—God’s grace. No matter where you are or what you face in life, God’s grace is sufficient.

Lutheran Hour Ministries has shared the Gospel of grace through Christ alone for 100 years. This book is a compilation of writings by various members of this organization to help people see how God’s grace applies to every part of their lives. As you explore this book, consider how these inspirational thoughts of the past 100 years still hold true for you today. Our prayer is that you will return to this book again and again for reassurance and inspiration.
It all started with the people of God—the laity—who had in their heart a calling to serve. In 1917 the church body had incurred a debt that weighed heavily on a dozen men. The Lutheran Laymen’s League was formed so that the debt could be retired, and a legacy for calling, equipping, and serving was born.
You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

ACTS 1:8
By 1930 the calling of these laymen led to the founding of *The Lutheran Hour*, which to date is the longest-running, continually-broadcast, Christ-centered radio broadcast in the world. By the 1940s it had become an international ministry of milestones that would follow one after another. From radio programs broadcast over traditional airwaves to podcasts, performing arts to Bible correspondence courses and video Bible studies, face-to-face interactions to digital outreach, and men’s clubs to international ministry centers, the list of how this ministry has adapted its ways of sharing the Gospel with those who need to hear it goes on and on.

Just as the Gospel spread from Jerusalem outward to the ends of the earth, Lutheran Hour Ministries remains committed to equipping others for *Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church.*
All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17
What’s amazing is how God led the vision of a few to become an outreach ministry to many that has spanned decades. Statistically speaking, today Lutheran Hour Ministries has a worldwide impact that would astound its founders. Today, 51 million are reached weekly through media, mission centers are located in more than 30 countries worldwide, in excess of 100,000 people have been trained for evangelism, and 15,000 are connected to Christian communities each year.

What’s astounding is how well Lutheran Hour Ministries is positioned for many more milestones to come, all because of a millstone of responsibility to spread the Gospel. Staff and constituents are constantly morphing the medium to match the audience. When the ministry first began, the only way to reach into households was through personal conversation. Then it was phones, radio, television, and online. The programs of the international centers vary, all matched to the best manner possible of reaching people through culturally-relevant means of ministry.

As we look to the future, new ways of equipping our laity for outreach await us. It has become a digital world and while the message of Christ’s love has never changed, it is essential that our methods for sharing it change so that the void in the lives of those who are lost might be filled with God’s immeasurable grace.
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

MATTHEW 28:19-20
It is only through the support of dedicated laypeople throughout the years that the various milestones in this ministry could ever have been conceived, much less accomplished. Individuals in their local districts have made it possible for the radio programs to be broadcast on their local stations, congregations welcomed those connected to them through media, volunteers packed supplies to send to children around the world, couples who wanted to leave a legacy provided for future ministry through bequests, and donors have given from their hearts—because each and every one knows that blessings are multiplied when the gifts of one join many.

What calling, equipping, and sending is yet to come? Only God knows. While the faces of ministry programming have changed along with the culture, the transforming power of God’s grace through Christ has never changed … and never will. Countless people around the world and in our own back yards still need to hear how God became flesh and dwelt among us, how Christ took our sins to the cross for the forgiveness of sins, and how the Holy Spirit plants saving faith in our hearts. There is renewed urgency for finding new ways to share a message that is as old as time, and thus the duty remains so that new milestones can be reached.

The International Lutheran Laymen’s League through Lutheran Hour Ministries remains committed to reaching the unreached with the life-transforming Gospel. While the world has changed over the last 100 years, the love of Christ is changeless. Ministry programs remain while others have come and gone; however, the legacy of mission is rich with threads of people and places woven together with one thing in common—the need to be saved by the only Savior whose death and resurrection can bring forgiveness and eternal life.

In John 20:21, Jesus Christ tells His disciples, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.” Though spoken thousands of years ago, these words still ring true today. It’s the calling that led a dozen men to ministry a century ago. It’s the equipping that has led to ministry milestones along the way. And it’s the sending that still leads us today.
For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

JEREMIAH 29:11
Amid the ebb and flow of hope and despair, tossed about as you are on the raging seas of doubt and distrust, there is an Anchor which will hold you fast and keep you safe from the rocks of destruction. I want you to see in this divine Christ, the Only-begotten of the Father, the greatest Friend humanity has ever known, the greatest Love the world has ever witnessed, the greatest Power that had ever asserted itself on this earth, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

[This] Jesus Christ is not a mere human being as you and I are … but He is beyond all possibility of doubt and hesitation, what St. Peter declares Him to be—“the Son of the living God.”

It is only a divine Christ who can help; it is only He who can say, “All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth,” and who so abundantly proved His possession of this power, who can extend to you and to me that forgiveness, that faith, that guidance, which leads us to life in the full and beautiful sense of that term.

We see many congregations in which the laity gladly relieves the pastor of every worry concerning the physical church property, its management and upkeep. Again and again, pastors tell us how happy they are that they have lay people who willingly assume Christian leadership in the various departments of church activity.
No one can share the Gospel, unless he has it himself. We say this without boasting or arrogance—we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.

There are many suppositions which in our own time have proved to be untrue. What was taught as the facts of science to my father and mother, for example, have all too often turned out to be the ravings of an idle dreamer. Some people have become so impressed by our world’s inability to arrive at truth that they have come to question everything, and as a result cannot arrive at a conviction about anything.

What I am telling you today is no supposition. Even if nothing else should turn out to be true, this would remain true. We believe, we are confident, we are sure that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.

What makes us so sure? Jesus Christ Himself—and God’s Holy Word telling us about Him. All the world knows that Jesus Christ lived—and that He died. We know—and this gives our belief its meaning—that He alone of all men rose from the dead, and was declared to be the Son of God with power.

The great fact of history is that God first loved us. God is love; His love was disclosed to us in this, that He sent His only Son into the world to bring us life. The love we speak of is not our love for God, by the love He showed to us in sending His Son in atonement for the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are bound to love one another. Though God has never been seen by any man, God Himself dwells in us if we love one another; His love is brought to perfection within us. God’s love works in the most adverse circumstances. It works in us, when we begin to recognize how we must look to Him. Only by facing hard reality can we begin to understand the merciful love of God. When we begin to grasp the unlikely, the impossible quality of God’s love for us—and only then—does that response rise in us which the apostle describes simply as love: “We love God because He first loved us.”
It is possible to know God—in Jesus Christ. The great God has caused the Light of His Glory to shine in the Face of Jesus Christ! That Light is shining into your heart at this very moment.

OSWALD HOFFMANN // APRIL 8, 1962 // THE LUTHERAN HOUR

Many people today are like children, afraid of a bumblebee but with no fear of a huge truck going by. This is an age of fear, where people are worried about everything, except about God. About Him they are not even concerned.

This is no way to live, either now or in preparation for the world to come. Both the now and the then have to be taken into consideration, if we would be [people of God]. As the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes put it, “God has put eternity into the mind of man,” any attempt to erase eternity for our own minds makes us something less.

To make us [who] He intended us to be, God interjected His eternal Self into human history in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Henceforth, no one can offer the excuse that it is impossible for him to know God. It is possible to know God—in Jesus Christ. The great God has caused the Light of His Glory to shine in the Face of Jesus Christ! That Light is shining into your heart at this very moment.

God has not left Himself without witnesses. The ultimate witness is Christ Himself, who witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession. The events of His life, death, and resurrection are more than history. They are God’s action on behalf of [all], atoning for sin, paying the price of guilt, earning the gift of pardon, granting eternal life to all who acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior.
HERMAN GOCKEL  
MARCH 1, 1970  //  THE LUTHERAN LAYMAN

What the church of [the future] will need is communicators who, while remaining faithful, at the same time are resourceful and imaginative enough to translate [religious] clichés into a language which will be meaningful to a new day.

This will not be easy. Nor will it come naturally. It will call for charismatic leaders, speakers, writers, editors—dedicated craftsmen in the never ending school of Spirit (see 1 Cor. 12:4-11).

Pray God that He give these precious gifts to His Church.

OSWALD HOFFMANN  //  OCTOBER 28, 1973  //  THE LUTHERAN HOUR

The time seems shorter and shorter to do all of the things that people expect to do in one lifetime. What our world needs is a rebirth of the wonder of faith—not any old kind of faith, but faith in the Living God.

Let’s put this in personal form. A man comes to the point of retirement. Another has taken his place at the office or at the workbench. While people are nice to him, it is clear that he is no longer essential. Then the question comes home: What is life all about anyway? Has this investment in life paid off? What is really important? What does it all amount to?

At that moment, that crucial moment, which could come anytime in life—at retirement or at the beginning. What if there is someone who can say to me: “Fear not,” or who can say to me “I have called you by name, you are mine,” who can say to me “Peace be with you”?

Christ has come to take that lump out of your throat, to lift the burden that weighs heavily upon you. He died just for you, and He lives just for you.
**Oswald Hoffmann // June 28, 1981 // The Lutheran Hour**

Time-out is a good strategy in sports. It is also a wise principle in everyday living. People need to take time out from their busy and bustling lives.

Jesus Christ did not have a guilty conscience about taking time out. He did not make His disciples feel guilty either. They were human and so was He. It always surprises and amazes people to realize that the eternal Son of God who came to be the Savior of the world was altogether human. It’s the glory of the Gospel that He put Himself squarely in our midst, became a part of our life, and actually gave His life for the sins of the world.

Whatever you do, take time out to worship God and to rest a while. Concentrate on God, and you will serve Him a lot better. When your body is fatigued, and your nerves are frayed, you will probably not be up to praising God with a loud voice.

Not only the body, but also the mind needs a rest once in a while. Of course, some people spend the whole week resting their minds. That needs to be changed, too! Take time out, change the pace.

**Gregory Seltz // June 23, 2013 // The Lutheran Hour**

*We need a new heart, a new mind, to overcome the sin and guilt that are real in our lives. God calls you to a new identity!*

You are never going to know who you are until you know yourself in and through the grace of Jesus Christ. He is your Creator, your Redeemer, your Life. Your Power to love and forgive, your Confidence to serve, your Hope to live an abundant life now and forever!

As sinners, as broken people, we need a whole new identity to know the power of the bonding, persevering love of God. We need a new heart, a new mind, to overcome the sin and guilt that are real in our lives.

God calls you to a new identity! He calls you to be a forgiven son or daughter of Jesus Christ. And when you understand the overwhelming grace of this new status, this new identity, earned on your behalf when Jesus lived, died, and rose again for you, that is the strength to live differently in this world.

So what would happen if you started to live life with His heart beating inside your body, not just granting you eternal life, but an eternal love to be shared from this day onward? A new identity in Christ, a new heart, a new life!
You may believe that your life is in a wintry season of inactivity, not useful to God or anyone else. You may be experiencing the sadness of thinking you’re a non-factor, washed up, out of the game.

Jesus doesn’t consider you sidelined. Jesus knows that the forgiveness of sins He earned for you brings the springtime of new purpose to your life, the fresh air of being God’s shining light in this world!

Moses was an 80-year-old man running from his sin, but God made him a deliverer. He was still in the game!

The Apostle John was exiled on an island, banished from society for a time as an old man, but Jesus used him as a messenger of encouragement for all believers. He was still in the game!

As believers in Jesus, you and I have a grand purpose in whatever we are doing right now. You reflect Him to others. You are the light of the world, like Jesus says, so that people “may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Jesus says you’re still in the game!

Jesus said in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.”

Christ chose us. That is good news. But we see here a connection between being chosen and choosing; between being chosen and bearing fruit; between being chosen and obeying God’s ways, commandments, statutes, and rules. That’s choice worth choosing!

Choose life from the One who made life possible for you again. The same God who breathed life into Adam at creation breathed new life into us through His Spirit-filled Word.

And we need that new breath of life in Christ. His Word is the oxygen mask of eternal life to those who are gasping for breath—who need that oxygen of His forgiveness and grace for life. Read His Word. Be baptized into His Name.

Breathe in His life-giving Word today and choose life. Breathe that breath of life and choose what’s good. Breathe that breath of life and choose blessing for others in your thoughts and prayers. The joy of being chosen produces the joy of choosing life so that others might know the One who saved and redeemed you as His own.
Today I’d like to tell you about a country church, which was having an old-fashioned mission festival.

Everything was perfect, except for one fellow who hung around on the outskirts of the festivities. His clothing was torn and tattered, his appearance, grimy and grubby. He wasn’t intrusive. He was just there. Of course, most of the time the outsider was forgotten.

Finally, the last day came. From the back of the gathering came the fellow who was not one of them. He reached the front of the congregation and spoke. The man, who was not “one of them”, quoted Peter: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.”

He continued, “This week, I was physically among you, but I was never ‘one of you’. Nobody included me or invited me to the activities. No one shared a meal.” Then he added, “Most of you averted your eyes and made me invisible.”

Churches that are warm, and growing, make a person feel like he was a long-lost relative who had returned home. Be brave and make everyone feel like he’s home. ◆
GREGORY SELTZ // OCTOBER 11, 2015 // THE LUTHERAN HOUR

Many of us are living cluttered lives. Guilt, pain, failure, vanity, and hurt—all of it crowds out what is good and what is life-giving.

But there’s a love that can declutter. It’s bigger than any other relationship you can have right now. And it can make the difference about everything, giving you an eternal life that’s big—one that lasts.

When Jesus sacrificed His life on the cross, He gave up everything—His very life—so He could declutter your life and provide a fresh and brand new beginning. A life that is big. One that’s eternal with Him.

Through His living, life-giving Word and through the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, Jesus declutters you, too. He empties you of the junk that separates you from God, and He fills you with His Spirit, His grace, His hope, His love.

Decluttered and made over. That’s new life in Jesus. So my big question for you today is, Do you have room in your life? Do you have room for the gift of life that God gives in Jesus? Will you let Jesus have His say over your life today? ♦

PHYLLIS WALLACE // DATE UNKNOWN // WOMAN TO WOMAN

His mercies are fresh every morning, and His forgiveness is total no matter what we’ve done. He wipes clean the slate for the sake of His Son, our ultimate advocate, who stands with us.

That’s been a hard lesson for me. I can too easily keep track of my wrongs and lose sight of my “rights.” That’s Satan—he tracks past failures and disappointments, but he has no clue about the future. Otherwise, why would he have thought that nailing Christ to the cross would put Him out of the picture for good?

Instead, it brought Christ back into the picture forever, for my forever and yours! ♦